

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 6-A

WASHINGTON TIMES
29 May 1985

PERSPECTIVES ON THE WORLD

By Edward Neilan



Eccentric uncle is hard to figure

The African jungle is no more foreboding than the entangling array of acronyms which greets the unsuspecting witness at a southern Africa intelligence briefing.

There are substantial political groups in the region which answer to the call letters ANC, UDF, NP, CP, PFF, UNITA, MPLA, SWAPO, MNR, PAC, ZANU, ZAPU, FNLA and MPC, to name a few.

The subtleties of political thrust belonging to each of these organizations cannot be absorbed PDQ. But if the sheer number of political organizations in the region is baffling to the average reader, it is no more confusing than the stance of United States policy in Angola and Mozambique.

Both are former Portuguese overseas territories and both are ruled by Marxist governments. The regime in Angola is kept afloat by shared revenues from a subsidiary of the American-owned Gulf Oil Corp. which operates petroleum installations at a place called Cabinda. Part of the oil revenue from the American firm provides most of the government's foreign exchange which is used to pay for the 25,000 Cuban soldiers on its soil. Angola says the Cubans are there to help protect the country from invasion by South Africa.

The other day Angolan soldiers reportedly killed or captured several South African soldiers on what appears to have been an abortive attempt to blow up the Gulf Oil installation. The United States reacted angrily to the revelation that South African troops were inside Angola, when by agreement they were supposed to have withdrawn long ago.

Over in Mozambique, the United States recently announced that it wants to provide military aid to the Marxist government of President Samora Machel.

In Johannesburg last week, representatives of the South African intelligence community made it known in no uncertain terms to a visiting reporter that they felt the United States was being too cautious and even cuddly with the respective Marxist regimes of Angola and Mozambique.

To paraphrase, they said Uncle Sam was playing an exceedingly dangerous and unproductive game in those places.

In Angola, particularly, where UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola) forces led by Jonas Savimbi could take over from the Luanda government of President Jose Eduardo dos Santos just about anytime they wanted, the situation is especially frustrating.

Allies of the United States find Washington protestations about the dangers of a Marxist government in Nicaragua less than credible when America is collaborating with Marxist governments in Africa.

If simultaneous offensives were mounted tomorrow morning by South African-backed forces, including Mr. Savimbi's well-trained troops, against Angola and Mozambique, there is every reason to believe that the Free World would have two victories in hand by the time of the sounding of the noon guns in Luanda and Maputo.

Such victories are sorely needed at this time and would provide a stirring example for anti-Marxist guerrilla fighters in other parts of the world.

Unfortunately, there are other considerations. South Africa now believes that the existing government in Mozambique is a better long-term bet for stability than the anti-Marxist guerrillas. The latter, it is said, have scant leadership and administrative capability and would become more of a drain on the South African resources than the existing Marxist government.

The Angolan situation is something else. It defies explanation why a big victory over the communist government there would not make sense. The United States' "constructive engagement" policy is supposed to avoid violence and warfare but in the case of Mr. Savimbi, there is a willing ally who can win points, territory and prestige for the West without the United States firing a shot.

Edward Neilan is foreign editor of The Times.